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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: SIX-PARTY TALKS

Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies shifted their focus on December 20 from local politics to sudden plunges in stock markets in Thailand and other Asian countries Monday. The pro-unification "United Daily News" front-paged a news story whose headline read "[Former President] Lee Teng-hui Supports Frank Hsieh to Run for Presidency [in 2008]." The local papers, however, gave very limited reporting and editorial coverage to the Six-Party Talks currently going on in Beijing. Only one op-ed piece in the pro-status quo "China Times" discussed the Six-Party Talks and said the nightmare of global nuclear proliferation might become a reality if the Six-Party Talks fail to make Pyongyang agree to get rid of its nuclear weapons. End summary.

"Nightmare of Global Nuclear Proliferation"

To-hai Liou, visiting research fellow at the Australian National University's Research School of Asia and the Pacific, opined in the pro-status quo "China Times" [circulation: 400,000] (12/20):

"... It is certain that if the Six-Party Talks fail to make Pyongyang agree to get rid of its nuclear weapons, Northeast Asia will likely become the second area after South Asia to possess nuclear weapons in the post-Cold War era. Such a development will also likely turn the nightmare of global nuclear proliferation into a reality, because countries in the Middle East are waiting for a favorable moment to make their moves. ... Judged from this perspective, it is plausible to say that now is the time for a showdown in the Six-Party Talks. The future development [of the talks] will bring about changes in the entire East Asian strategic security tectonic plates and will create a very strong impact on Taiwan. This writer believes that, based on the final resolution pattern of the North Korea nuclear issue, three scenarios - namely, 'co-management by China and the United States [over North Korea]', 'tri-polar system formed by China, the United States, and Japan,' and 'U.S.-China confrontation' - may possibly happen. ..."

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